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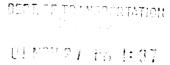
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NHTBA.01-8876-10



MARCH 6, 7, 8 ORLANDO, FL

Heid in conjunction with the 38th Annual NTEA Companion March 5-2

November 27, 2001

Dr. Jeffrey W. Runge Administrator National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 400 Seventh Street, SW Washington, DC 20590

# Petition for Rulemaking on Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 201U

# Submitted by the National Truck Equipment Association

# Dear Dr. Runge:

The National Truck Equipment Association (NTEA) respectfully submits this petition to amend FMVSS 201U. We ask that exclusions be made from this standard for certain low-volume vehicles with specific characteristics that make compliance with the standard impracticable. We also ask that the requirements of the standard, as they apply to multi-stage produced vehicles, be delayed until March 1, 2004. This additional time would both allow NHTSA to make a determination on this petition and provide the affected companies a reasonable amount of time to comply with whatever regulations ultimately apply.

The NTEA has determined that simply doing the minimum number of tests to certify compliance with FMVSS 201U would cost NTEA member companies over \$160,000,000 (see appendix A and B) for model year 2003 alone. This does not include any development costs or costs to actually implement the standard. The NTEA has also determined that due to the capacity limitations of testing facilities qualified to conduct such testing it would take over 64 years (see appendix A and B) to complete testing for the affected vehicles of model year 2003.

The National Truck Equipment Association (NTEA) is the nation's only trade association representing distributors and manufacturers of multi-stage produced, work related trucks, truck bodies and equipment. The NTEA also represents various industry-related firms and organizations. The NTEA currently has over 1,500 member companies located throughout the nation. Most NTEA members are small businesses that sell on a local or regional basis.

The average NTEA member is a typical small business, a closely held corporation or independent proprietorship, run by community based management, operating a single facility and employing a small local work force. The average distributor member of the NTEA, the companies that sell and install truck bodies and related equipment (and generally are considered final stage manufacturers, intermediate stage manufacturers or alterers under NHTSA definitions), have been in business some 30 years, have annual sales of less than \$5 million and employ 20 people. The average NTEA manufacturer member, companies that fabricate and occasionally install truck bodies and related equipment, have been in business over 36 years, have \$20 million in annual sales and employ approximately 300 people. Virtually all NTEA distributor and manufacturer members qualify as small businesses for purposes of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

Vehicles produced by NTEA member companies for commercial or vocational use include, but are not limited to, fire trucks, ambulances, utility company vehicles, aerial bucket trucks, tow trucks, beverage delivery trucks, digger derricks, dump trucks, contractor vehicles and snow removal vehicles.

#### **Affected Vehicles**

Based on the current scope of FMVSS 201U, the NTEA estimates that approximately 377,000 vehicles produced by NTEA member companies are affected by the rule (appendix B details the affected vehicle configurations and appendix C provides annual production estimates for each category of vehicle). They include ambulances, law enforcement vehicles, wheelchair transport vehicles, mobile offices, utility company vehicles and vehicles equipped with bins and racks.

#### Partitions and Bulkheads

One particular problem associated with FMVSS 201U for the commercial and vocational vehicle industry concerns vehicles that have installed bulkheads or partitions. The installation of a bulkhead or partition will invalidate any chassis manufacturer's compliance statement that may be available (see draft compliance language in appendix D). The amendment that the NTEA proposes in this petition would resolve this issue.

Bulkheads or partitions are used in a variety of vocations that haul or carry many odd-shaped objects that can not be readily secured in the cargo area. The partition protects the driver and passenger from loose or shifting cargo (particularly during sudden deceleration) that could otherwise hit them in the back of the head. In the case of emergency vehicles, such as police cars, the partition protects the law enforcement personnel from back seat occupants.

In commercially regulated vehicles, FMCSR 393.106 requires the use of frontend structures to protect the driver's compartment of commercial vehicles. The bulkheads designed for other vehicles perform the same safety related function.

#### **Vehicle Production**

As detailed in appendix C, the NTEA estimates that approximately 377,000 NTEA member produced vehicles (in over 1,200 identified configurations – appendix B) are affected by FMVSS 201U.

#### **Options to Demonstrate Compliance**

Typically, multi-stage vehicle manufacturers are able to demonstrate compliance with various safety standards without conducting full-scale individual dynamic tests (as discussed below). Multi-stage manufacturers generally are able to pass through the chassis manufacturer's compliance or rely on information from other sources to certify compliance with due care. In the case of FMVSS 201U, these other methods of compliance certification are not an option. Under the standard as it is currently written, in-vehicle dynamic testing per NHTSA's testing protocol, is the only way to adequately demonstrate compliance with the standard.

#### a) Pass Through of Chassis Manufacturer Compliance

The most common method by which multi-stage manufacturers certify compliance is by "passing through" the chassis manufacturer's certification. This is done by completing the vehicle within the specified parameters provided by the chassis manufacturer in order to keep the vehicle's compliance intact.

In some cases, the multi-stage manufacturer can not pass through the chassis manufacturer's certification. This happens in the following situations: the multi-stage manufacturer needs to complete the vehicle outside the parameters provided by the chassis manufacturer; the chassis manufacturer does not provide any compliance information to the multi-stage manufacturer; or the vehicle is completed from a cutaway chassis, a strip chassis or a cowl chassis (legally, a pass-through does not currently exist for vehicles completed on those chassis types).

In the case of FMVSS 201U, the NTEA has been informed by various chassis manufacturers that they will not be providing any compliance information for cutaway chassis, chassis cowls and strip chassis. Additionally, the completion guidelines that would allow for "pass-through" of the chassis manufacturer's certification for other vehicles, such as vehicles altered from completed vehicles, will be so restrictive to eliminate it as a compliance option (see appendix D).

# b) Information from component vendors

In the case of FMVSS 201U, test data from component manufacturers is not enough to certify compliance. Validation requires in-vehicle system testing. Component level testing does not reflect chin rotation or other possible invehicle test variations that would likely affect compliance. Additionally, chassis manufacturer compliance testing data is proprietary and not available to outside component vendors, as such, component testing could not be assimilated into in-vehicle test results. Lastly, combined individual component level research and development costs would likely exceed whole vehicle testing costs. As such, compliance data is not realistically available from component manufacturers.

#### c) Engineering analysis

In order to demonstrate compliance via engineering analysis, FMVSS 201U specific experience and knowledge would be needed by each multi-stage vehicle manufacturer. This necessary level of experience is not available to final stage manufacturers with a new requirement of this nature. Previous dynamic test data is also needed for engineering analysis to be adequate for compliance certification. Such previous data does not exist.

# d) Computer modeling

Computer programming of this nature is very expensive. It requires highly specialized personnel and is not widely available outside of the chassis manufacturers. Computer modeling for certifying compliance to safety standards requires a database of previous in-vehicle tests. These databases of previous testing data must contain very specific targeting data for every vehicle model.

Computer modeling for safety standard compliance is only used by the chassis manufacturers as a development tool. It is not used to replace vehicle testing.

#### e) Consortium dynamic testing

Testing by several companies using a single generic vehicle configuration can often be a good compliance tool. The testing data gathered from the generic design can be used by groups of companies to make compliance determinations about a number of different vehicles. In the case of FMVSS

201U, the compliance tests developed by NHTSA are very specific, even minor trim differences in a single model can produce significantly different test results. As such, no generic designs can be used for testing.

## f) Individual vehicle dynamic test

Conducting in-vehicle compliance tests for the number of vehicle configurations produced by the multi-stage trucks and specialty vehicle industry is not economically or technologically possible.

As can be seen in greater detail in appendix B, there are over 1,200 identifiable vehicle configurations being produced (not including minor trim differences in model configurations that could also affect compliance). The average cost of one vehicle compliance test is between \$14,000 and \$17,000. This does not include any development costs, vehicle costs, costs for re-testing after any failures or transportation of the vehicle to the test facility. The two companies that provide this type of testing (MGA and Veridian) can only test 12 vehicles per month.

As detailed in appendix A it would cost this industry a minimum of \$160,000,000 and over 64 years to complete compliance testing for model year 2003.

It is important to note that this testing cost figure is for the actual lab testing alone. It does not include any costs for vehicles, development, tooling, retesting, transportation of vehicles or administration. One industry group, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, has estimated the actual minimum testing costs to be between \$137,500 and \$217,500 per model. While NTEA members build on a wider variety of chassis, based on our research the NTEA would not dispute these estimates. As mentioned earlier, NTEA members produce over 1200 distinct models that are affected by this regulation. Additionally, these costs do not take into account the actual costs of countermeasures in production vehicles that would be necessary to produce a compliant vehicle.

Based on the testing costs and testing facility capacity detailed above, it would be a practical impossibility to sell a compliant vehicle in the marketplace.

#### Requested Relief

As detailed above, the compliance costs associated with FMVSS 201U will make it impracticable for multi-stage vehicle manufacturers to build and sell certain vehicles to the businesses, municipalities and law enforcement agencies that require them. We request that NHTSA amend the standard as stated below. These requested amendments would allow emergency and law enforcement vehicles, as well as those equipped with potentially life-saving bulkheads or partitions, to continue to be available in the marketplace. We also ask that the effective date of the standard be delayed until March 01, 2004.

# Proposed Amendments to Section 6.3(c), (d) and new (e) of FMVSS 201

- (c) Any target located rearward of a vertical plane 600 mm behind the seating reference point of the driver's seating position in (an ambulance or) a motor home.
- (d) Any target in a walk-in van, ambulance, fire fighting, rescue, emergency or law enforcement vehicles.
- (e) Any target in a truck or MPV located rearward of a vertical transverse plane through the foremost design H-point of the rear most forward facing designated seating position where the vehicle is equipped with a full or partial bulkhead or other similar device for the purpose of protecting or isolating the driver and passenger compartment from the cargo carrying, load bearing, work performing area of the vehicle.

New language in bold italics, deleted language in bold ( )

Thank you for your consideration of this Petition. If you would like any additional information, please contact me at (202) 557-3500.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Kastner

Michel Kester

Director of Government Relations

NTEA Washington, D.C. office

## Appendix A

# **FMVSS 201U Testing Cost**

## **Vehicle Testing Facility Capacity**

- Two Facilities Available to the Public (MGA and Veridian)
- Maximum combined FMVSS 201 U testing capacity is 12 vehicles per month

# Average Per Vehicle Total Testing Cost\*

- \$14,000 at MGA
- \$16,337 at Veridian

## **Industry Totals**

- Minimum Annual Industry Testing Costs \$160,397,022
   (1216 configurations X per configuration testing cost) See also Appendix B
- Time To Complete Model Year 2003 Testing 64.9 years (Testing facility annual capacity X total testable configurations) See also Appendix B

<sup>\*</sup>Testing costs do not include the costs of engineering, development, prototype vehicles, tooling, or parts. It does not include transportation or removal of test vehicles from the test centers. Average cost assumes 100% passage on first try.

# Appendix B

# Number of Distinct Vehicle Configurations Subject to FMVSS 201U in Each Vehicle Category

•	Bins and Racks	302
•	Ambulances	20
•	Commercial Wheelchair Transport	188
•	Medical Equipment Transport	112
•	Mobile Office	120
•	Law Enforcement	147
•	Pickup and Delivery	24
•	Pickup and SUV Accessories	<u>303</u>
•	Industry Total	1216

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2				Pickup & BUV Accessories			Wire Mesh Partition/Dog Screen	post advanced based on State Charles	Overhead Consoles-Long	Overhead Consolesong w/ TV 5.5"	Overhead Consoles-Lang w/ TV 13.1"	Hoof mounted Strake & Spot Lights	Light Ben							"Nobe: Vehicle matrix does not include foreign models			_		Major Vocations (list not all inclusive)	THE PARTY OF THE PARTY OF THE PARTY OF
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2						Testing Costs		Testing Ca	apabilities			Veridian Testing Itemized: based on minimum testing to get report		
3	:		Contact		Vehicle and Instrument Prep, Targeting, Vehicle	Running Tests: Cost per shot using 22 targets, including report, pictures, video, etc.	Average Vehicle Testing Cost	Max # Vehicles per week per location	# of locations that can perform testing			Test Setup	\$2,000	
4		MGA	Mike Smith		\$3,000				2 1		·	Targeting	\$1,737	
5		Veridian	Jim Czame		\$3,737				1	t		Impacts	\$6,600	
6		TRC	Jeff Sankey	1	Does not perform 201U testing at this time							high-speed video	\$4,000	
7		NATC	Dr. Simi		Does not perform 201U testing at this time							post test cleanup and deliverables	\$2,000	
8		Karco Engineering	Frank Richa	ardson	Does not perform 201U testing at this time							Testing Total:	\$16,337	
9												sub-total of all non-setup costs	\$12,600	
10		* Cost does not inclu	de test vehicl	les, trim,	prototype tooling, proto	otype parts, re-testin	ıg					# of targets:	22	

Appendix C

Annual Production Estimates of Vehicles Subject to FMVSS 201U

Vehicle Type	Volume	%8,500lbs or less	%8,501-10,000lbs
Bins and Racks	275,000	80	20
Ambulances	2,100	0	100
Commercial Wheelchair Transport	14,000	0	100
Medical Equipment Transport	3,000	20	80
Mobile Office	4,000	75	25
Law Enforcement	75,000	100	0
Pickup and Delivery	4,000	0	100
Pickup and SUV Accessories	<u>750</u>	50	50
Industry Total	377,850	298,975	78,875

#### Appendix D

# Draft OEM Compliance Statement for Multi-stage Manufacturers

1) Vehicles with an original equipment headliner.

This incomplete vehicle, when completed, will conform to FMVSS 201 providing no alterations are made which affect the function, physical or mechanical properties, environment, location or vital spatial clearances of the components, assemblies or systems identified below and providing that any second unit body installation does not result in FMH chin contact with the body at any required target location:

Instrument panel
Seats
Interior compartment doors
Sunvisors
Arm Rests
Headliners
Upper interior trim components

2) Vehicles with headliner delete option.

Conformity with the upper roof impact requirements of FMVSS 201 is not substantially affected by the design of this incomplete vehicle and General Motors makes no representation as to the conformity with this section of the standard. Conformity with other portions of this standard are as stated in 1 above